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## **Supernatural Monsters and Neo-Victorian Detectives: Capitalism, Rationality, and Affect in Japanese Girls' Comics**

### **Abstract**

Detective fiction was introduced to Japanese readers in the nineteenth century together with the idea that the rationality the detective embodies is an ideal for Japan to emulate. This article examines Yuki Kaori's *Count Cain Series*, a neo-Victorian Japanese girls' comic (*shōjo manga*) that references the Holmes stories and the wider genre of the detective mystery. The *Count Cain Series* both supports and challenges the idealisation of Western rationality. It raises doubts about the ability of Western rationality to resolve the social disorder engendered by the development of industrial capitalism and mass consumer culture in Japan since the early twentieth century. The text thereby articulates a contradictory desire to emulate the West and assert Japaneseness, which has characterised Japan's encounter with the West since the mid-nineteenth century.

### **Keywords**

manga, Japan, detective fiction, rationality, organic community

In “The Man with the Twisted Lip” (1891), the famed fictional detective Sherlock Holmes investigates the murder of a wealthy middle-class gentleman, Mr. Neville St Clair, who was apparently killed by a disfigured beggar, Hugh Boone, while attending to unknown “business in the City” (Doyle [1891] 2007, 539). Holmes discovers that Mr St Clair and Hugh Boone are in fact the same person, and that the former had secretly acquired the income for his middle-class lifestyle through the morally questionable “profession” of begging in the City. Mr St Clair’s crime reveals how money earned through questionable means radically disrupts class distinctions between the bourgeoisie and the urban poor. Holmes solves the mystery by connecting the various clues he gathers into a coherent pattern that “makes sense” in accordance with the empirical laws of the natural sciences and the logic of cause and effect. In establishing epistemological order, Holmes re-imposes social order. He makes Mr St Clair promise that “there must be no more of Hugh Boone” (540), thereby redrawing the boundaries between the middle class and its social Others. In this short story, the detective uses empirical science and logic to order or “rationalise” seemingly disparate material phenomena into a coherent system where every element has its proper place, and keeps within its proper boundaries. In rationalising the social order, the detective assuages fin-de-siècle anxieties about the potential of money to destabilise social identities in an industrial capitalist society.

This article examines Yuki Kaori’s *Count Cain Series* (*Hakushaku Kain shirīzu* [1991–

94, 2001–04]), a Japanese girls' comic (*shōjo* manga) set in Victorian Britain featuring the adventures of a detective named Cain and his butler Riff. *Count Cain* references the Holmes stories and, more generally, the genre of the detective mystery as it has developed not only in Britain but also in Japan since the nineteenth century. The genre was introduced to Japanese readers in the nineteenth century together with the idea that the rationality the detective embodies – Western empiricism, science, logic, and the practice of rationalising all forms of knowledge and social relations – is an ideal for Japan to emulate. *Count Cain* both supports and challenges this idealisation of Western rationality. It raises doubts about the ability of Western rationality to resolve the social disorder engendered by the development of industrial capitalism and mass consumer culture in Japan since the early twentieth century. The manga thereby articulates a contradictory desire to emulate the West on the one hand, and to assert Japaneseness on the other. This contradiction has characterised Japan's encounter with the West and subsequent Westernisation since its opening to Western trade in the mid-nineteenth century.

*Count Cain* draws on the Gothic to propose that Western rationality is ultimately unable to solve mysteries and re-establish social order. The figure of the supernatural monster in the manga indirectly represents the consumer who is driven by an insatiable desire to consume commodities. The manga demonstrates that this desire fuels the transgression of social norms and threatens to destroy the society that its characters inhabit. The monstrous mother figure in

particular embodies fears of Japanese women neglecting their roles as wives and mothers to indulge in their newfound freedom as individual consumers in a mass consumer culture.

Instead of showing how science and logic rationalise and draw limits around such transgressive commodity consumption, as one would expect in a classic detective story, *Count Cain* posits an irrational solution to irrational consumption. The manga juxtaposes the figure of the monstrous mother with the motif of the happy family, whose strong emotional ties of love and sympathy enable it to triumph over the former. The manga thus departs from the championing of rationality in “The Man with the Twisted Lip” and other Holmes stories.

In problematizing Western rationality and privileging irrational affective ties, *Count Cain* echoes Charles Dickens’ 1854 industrial novel *Hard Times*. These “neo-Victorian” resonances suggest that the two different historical and geographical contexts of Dickens’ Britain and Japan in the 1990s and 2000s actually share strikingly similar anxieties about, and responses to, social disorder. Nevertheless, *Count Cain*’s evocation of a community much larger than that of the family in *Hard Times* situates the manga as part of a distinctive history of engagement with Western rationality in Japan. The manga echoes the disillusionment with Western rationality and the corresponding idealisation of the national organic community that became widespread in Japan during the Asia-Pacific War in the 1930s and early 1940s.

In reading Japanese neo-Victorian manga in relation to Japan’s encounter with the West in the nineteenth century, as well as Japan’s own history of aggression in Asia in the

1930s and 1940s, this article expands the scope of postcolonial studies to take into account the experience of informal and non-European imperialisms in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Although Japan came under Western influence when its ports were forced open by the United States, Britain and other European imperial powers in the 1850s, the country was never formally colonised. After adopting an intensive programme of Westernisation in the 1870s and 1880s, Japan became an imperial power in its own right, with colonial possessions and informal spheres of influence in Taiwan, Korea, China, Manchuria, the Pacific islands and Southeast Asia.

In taking a broadly “postcolonial” approach to Japanese manga, this article also explores how old patterns of imperialism persist in a different form in the twenty-first century. The affective community that *Count Cain* constructs is not of the nation, but of a transnational collectivity of readers united by the shared experience of reading *shōjo* manga. As such, the empire that *Count Cain* gestures towards is not the same territorial empire that Japan lost at the end of the war in 1945. With the global turn to cultural commodity production and export in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, *Count Cain* envisions and participates in creating a Japanese cultural and economic empire based on the shared consumption of manga, anime, video games, and other popular culture products. This pop cultural empire, despite its aura of “up-to-the-minute” trendiness, is not a purely contemporary phenomenon. It is, in oblique and subtle ways, inflected by the introduction of

English-language detective fiction and the ideal of Western rationality into Japan in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Ideal of Western Rationality**

Detective fictions imported from Britain and the United States into Japan in the Meiji period (1868-1912) have played a significant role in promoting Western ideas and practices that the Japanese intelligentsia was advocating in more “serious” media. The idea that there was a superior, Western form of rationality which Japan should emulate was introduced to the Japanese reading public in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century through both the writings of Japanese intellectuals and imported Western works of detective fiction. The *Meiropusha*, a group of scholars who wanted to spread knowledge of the West in the 1870s, championed Western empirical science, logic, and a way of thinking and acting that Max Weber (quoted by Derek Sayer on capitalism) calls “rationalisation.” Weber defines rationalisation as a principle of thought and action that involves organising ideas and things into a coherent system, where all elements have their proper place, and interact with each other in ways that are determined by the rules of the system. Rationalisation involves drawing boundaries, categorising, and linking seemingly random phenomena into patterns structured

by the laws of logic and of cause and effect. As Sayer explains: “Rationalisation . . . in Weber connotes systematicity, consistency, method: whether as a cast of mind, or as the principle on which organisations are structured, it implies the exclusion of arbitrariness” (1991, 114).

In an article entitled “Mysteries” published in 1874 in the *Meiroke zasshi*, the Meirokusha’s journal, Tsuda Mamichi proposes that all mysterious phenomena can be ordered or rationalised into coherent systems governed by rules, and thereby explained away. He asserts that all mysteries can ultimately be elucidated with reference to the physical laws of the natural sciences:

There are [really] no mysteries in the world. Mysteries only arise when we do not clearly understand the phenomena that we see. Materialist scholars . . . expect to explain the soul by physical laws when the study of the brain is advanced and clarified beyond the area of doubt. Only then will there finally be no mysteries in the world.” (Tsuda [1874] 1976, 316)

Like Weber, Tsuda and his compatriots saw rationalisation as the key to the “disenchantment of the world”. Unlike Weber, however, they approved of this.

Japanese literary critics in the early twentieth century, such as Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke, thought that the solution of mysteries in detective fiction served a similarly rationalising and



disenchanting purpose. These critics argued that detective fiction embodied analytical reasoning skills, a spirit of critical inquiry, the sciences, empiricism, and a fair and consistent legal system, all of which were rational qualities that Japan had to learn from the West (Silver 2008, 3–4). *Shinseinen*, a magazine that published both translated Western detective fiction and original Japanese works, published numerous critical essays lamenting what the critics saw as the Japanese failure to write good detective fiction. Hirabayashi wrote in 1925 that:

Japan is fifty or a hundred years behind the West, as one can tell from the development of the modern novel; when one contemplates this fact, it seems natural that there should be almost no works worthy of being called detective novels in Japan and almost no writers of them. . . . The reason the detective novel hasn't developed in Japan is . . . that Japanese civilisation is scientifically infantile and primitive. (as quoted in Silver 2008, 170)

Katō Takeo posited a similar critique in the same year: “The real reason [why good detective novels do not appear in Japan] is that the Japanese mind is not given to close reasoning. [The Japanese] are not logical, and they are not scientific” (as quoted in Silver 2008, 170). Hirabayashi's and Katō's disparaging comparison of Japanese detective fiction with its allegedly superior Western precursor reveals that the transmission of detective fiction into

Japan was closely intertwined with the idealisation of Western empirical science, logic, and a rationalising way of thinking and acting that could produce what Tsuda's colleague Nishi Amane ([1874] 1976, 223) called "systematically organised knowledge". As a neo-Victorian text that references the Holmes stories and the wider tradition of Western and Japanese detective fiction, *Count Cain* continues to be shaped by, and to react against, this desire to emulate Western rationality.

### **Science and the Supernatural**

Many works of detective fiction are not purely "tales of ratiocination" but are narratives that present an uneasy tension between science and the supernatural. Nevertheless, many of these detective stories ultimately resolve this tension, and privilege the rational over the irrational. At the end of the narrative, the detective figure almost invariably succeeds in using his/her powers of empirical observation, scientific knowledge, and reasoning skills to demystify what appeared to be beyond rational explication.

*Count Cain*, however, maintains the tension between science and the supernatural. In doing so, the manga exhibits a contradictory desire to champion Western empirical science, logic, and the principle of rationalisation on one hand, and to deny the value of this Western

rationality on the other. The detective protagonist Cain solves many of his cases with his Holmes-like knowledge of chemicals and poisons, but some of the characters have supernatural powers that cannot be explained by science. Cain eventually discovers that the mastermind behind the “strange incidents” (*kaijiken*) that surround him is the spectre of his deceased aunt and biological mother, Augusta. The manga thus breaks one of the ten cardinal rules of detective fiction outlined by the detective fiction writer and Catholic priest Father Ronald Knox, who declared that “[a]ll supernatural or preternatural agencies are ruled out as a matter of course” (as quoted in Scaggs 2005, 37).

*Count Cain*’s refusal to dispel the supernatural with science and reason challenges the idea, promulgated in classic detective fiction and in Tsuda’s essay, that science and logical thinking can explain all mysteries. *Count Cain*, however, is not akin to what Brian McHale (1992) calls an anti-detective novel, which exposes the limits of rationality by revealing the inherently unstable nature of the detective’s interpretations. Neither does the manga claim that supernatural beings really exist. The supernatural is ultimately contained within the fantasy space of the narrative and its invitation to the reader to suspend his/her disbelief. The figure of the supernatural monster in *Count Cain* represents, through the distorting lens of the Gothic, anxieties about the individual’s self-centred consumption of commodities and the resultant destabilisation of social roles. The manga’s refusal to dispel the supernatural with science suggests that Western rationality is ultimately inadequate in reining in transgression

and fixing individual consumers back into an orderly social structure. In a significant departure from the Holmes stories it references, *Count Cain* demonstrates that Western empirical science and logic are unable to discover the truth, and that in failing to solve the mystery, Western science and logic fail to restore the social order that has been disrupted by the forces of industrial capitalism.

### **Monstrous Mothers**

In *Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires and Global Capitalism*, David McNally (2011) argues that monster figures in contemporary popular culture symbolically register the monstrosities of capitalism. The figure of the monster in *Count Cain* registers the consumer's monstrous desire to consume an ever-increasing amount of commodities. The ghost of Cain's aunt Augusta makes her first appearance in the manga as a skull with a mantle wrapped around it (Image 1).

Image 1: Augusta's skull. (*Count Cain Series: Godchild*, Vol. 7, p. 188)

The withered skull, with its long, witch-like white hair, hollow eyes and gaping mouth,

contrasts starkly with the pretty lace trimmings and cutesy ribbon bow on the mantle. This eerily incongruous union between an iconic symbol of death and a frivolous, ornamental commodity creates an uncanny frisson that obliquely points to the conjunction between destruction and consumption. For Freud, the uncanny is “that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well-known and had long been familiar” ([1919] 2003, 124). Augusta represents the uncanny return of repressed fears of young Japanese women neglecting their “traditional” roles as wives and mothers to indulge in their newfound freedom as individuals in a capitalist consumer society.

Unlike the other failed mother figures in *Count Cain* who love their children not too wisely but too well, Augusta produces children only in order to destroy them. She enjoys tormenting Cain, to whom she had given birth after an incestuous affair with her own brother, and Cain’s half-brother Jizabel. She later feels that tormenting her own family is not enough, and seeks to destroy the entire world for her own pleasure. Fred Botting (2008) reads the vampire as a metaphor for the voracious consumer who defers death to consume an ever-increasing amount of commodities. Augusta is such a vampiric consumer. Her association with apocalyptic annihilation rather than fruitful (re)production brings to mind the conjunction between destruction and consumption emblematised in the skull with the mantle (Image 1). It implicitly points to the dangers of consuming commodities for one’s own pleasure over and beyond any rational limits. Furthermore, Augusta’s destruction of her

children implies that such irrational consumption has especially deleterious effects on women's roles as mothers. Bad mothering in *Count Cain* is an oblique representation of the absence of mothering in Japan in the early twentieth century, and again in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

In depicting Augusta as a monstrous mother, *Count Cain* echoes the social panic and media frenzy of the 1980s and 1990s that played up fears of young Japanese women turning away from motherhood in order to pursue a self-centred consumerist lifestyle. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Japanese mass media ran sensationalised reports on what it perceived as a new breed of young Japanese women called the "Hanako-tribe" or *Hanako-zoku* (after the title of a young women's fashion magazine). These Hanakos or "parasite singles," according to the media, lived with their parents in order to spend all the money they earned as "Office Ladies" on expensive designer goods. They also delayed marriage and motherhood in order to prolong this period of carefree consumerist adolescence.<sup>2</sup>

This is not to say that Japanese women before the emergence of the Hanako stereotype did not participate in consumption at all. In the period immediately after the Second World War, consumer goods industries actively targeted Japanese women, but they constructed Japanese female consumers as mothers who bought commodities such as refrigerators and washing machines for the household rather than for their personal use (Skov and Moeran 1995). According to Lise Skov and Brian Moeran (1995), this situation changed in the 1970s

when the international oil crisis prompted the development of the service sector in the Japanese economy, which created more job opportunities for women. As a result, Japanese women became increasingly visible in the public sphere as workers with a significant amount of disposable income to spend on themselves. This prompted industry and advertisers to appeal to Japanese women not only as consumer-representatives of the family but also as individual consumers (Skov and Moeran 1995).

In other words, anxieties about Japanese women's consumption in the 1980s and 1990s were not primarily concerned with the fact that Japanese women were consuming commodities. Japanese public opinion was more troubled by the fact that Japanese women were consuming commodities as individuals outside the institutions of marriage and motherhood, and that such individualistic consumption was threatening to displace the conventional female roles of wife and mother. Likewise, Augusta in *Count Cain* indulges in excessive consumption for her personal pleasure at the expense of her family. Seen in the light of Japanese discourses in the 1980s and 1990s on the decline of motherhood, Augusta becomes an embodiment of fears that Japanese female consumers are putting self before family and breaking out of the boundaries of their "proper" social roles as wives and mothers.

Such anxieties about Japanese women's transgressive participation in consumption outside the home are not a recent development, and they can be traced back to the emergence of the *modan gāru* ("modern girl") in Japan in the 1920s. As an archetype created and

sensationalised by the Japanese mass media, the *modan gāru* or *moga*, much like the Hanako of the 1980s and 1990s, emerged in the context of a rapidly developing consumer culture and became the icon of that culture and of the act of consumption itself (Sato 2003). The *moga*, according to the mass media of the time, made herself highly visible in public spaces through her shopping, eating, and general *flânerie* in the Ginza. Therefore, the *moga* did not conform to the normative gendered division between public spaces and the private home, and the dominant feminine ideal of *ryōsai kenbo* (“good wife, wise mother”). The *moga* was not only “anti-motherhood.” She was a free-wheeling individual without any ties of filiation, obligation, or affection to family, friends, and lovers (Silverberg 1991). Although public discourse on the *moga* in the 1920s was torn between affirmation and condemnation, the rise of cultural nationalism and the militarists’ ascendance to power in the 1930s put an end to the *moga* and prompted a return to the ideal of *ryōsai kenbo* (Silverberg 1991). The militarist state actively discouraged Japanese women from engaging in individualistic consumption by placing women’s magazines under tight control, and outlawing all vestiges of “Western decadence”, including the permanent wave hairstyle much favoured by *moga* (Silverberg 1991). In place of the individualistic consumption epitomised by the *moga*, the state idealised women’s reproductive abilities and championed the mother as the cornerstone of the family (Skov and Moeran 1995).

Japanese detective fiction written in the 1920s and 1930s similarly sought to assuage



anxieties about consumption and its destabilising effects on social roles. *Count Cain* is as much influenced by such early twentieth-century Japanese detective fiction as it is by the Holmes stories and the Gothic. Kawana Sari (2008) argues that detective fiction such as Edogawa Ranpo's emerged in the 1920s and 1930s in response to destabilising social changes brought about by rapid industrialisation in Japan. According to Kawana, Japanese detective fiction of this period articulates apprehensions about the social malaise or "diphtheria of modernity" (2008, 2):

Writers of detective fiction depict the ambiguous figures of modernity, such as the tail [stalker], *moga*, scientist, spy, and demobilised soldier, in order to express the fast, opaque, and fragmentary condition of modern existence. . . . These figures embody the precariousness of the post-Enlightenment world where rationality has failed and the potential for total mayhem is an ever-present danger (15).

Ranpo's 1928 novella *Injū* (*Beast in the Shadows*) in particular demonstrates how frighteningly unstable and multiple social roles have become with the rise of a mass consumer culture in the major cities of Japan. It also shows that Western empirical science and logic, the tools of the detective's trade, are unable to order or "rationalise" this social disorder. The narrator of *Injū* is a detective mystery writer who turns detective himself when

he tries to determine who has been sending murderous threats to a young married woman. With the loss of feudal and rural social structures in the burgeoning metropolis of 1920s Tokyo, the narrator, the young woman, and her businessman husband are free to experiment with the multiple roles of sadist/masochist, detective fiction writer/reader, and criminal/victim. All of these roles are performed through the consumption of commodities. For example, the young woman and her husband engage in sadomasochistic sex and voyeurism by using everyday items such as a riding crop, gloves, and an artificial hairpiece.

This playing with plural identities creates a great deal of confusion, which the narrator sets out to demystify. He initially thinks that the criminal is a fellow detective fiction writer named Ōe Shundei or Hirata Ichirō. However, he reconsiders his deductions upon finding a new clue and argues that Shundei is a fictional construct created by the woman's husband to frighten her. He then deduces that the husband was not actually killed by Shundei and had died because of a bizarre accident during a session of voyeuristic S-and-M sex-play with his wife. However, the narrator later overturns his deductions again when he finds another clue. He accuses the woman of killing her husband and inventing the persona of Shundei to create the impression that her husband was the one who invented the persona. By the end of the novella, the narrator (and the reader) is in a state of total incomprehension. The woman dies without ever confessing her alleged crimes and the narrator is plagued with "terrifying suspicions" (276) that he might have been wrong.

Unlike Holmes in “The Man with the Twisted Lip”, the narrator fails to restore epistemological order, and thereby fails to restore social order. The proliferating and unstable social roles made possible by industrial capitalism and its accompanying mass consumer culture continue to haunt the narrator and the reader at the end of the narrative. Like *Injū*, *Count Cain* articulates anxieties about the debilitating consequences of consuming commodities (especially when indulged in by young women), and it shares *Injū*’s deep scepticism of Western rationality’s ability to contain the social transgressions arising out of commodity consumption.

### **Happy Families**

However, unlike *Injū*, *Count Cain* proposes a solution to the inadequacy of Western rationality. The manga creates an opposition between the monstrous Augusta and the protagonist Cain’s community of allies. In doing so, it turns away from Western empirical science, logic, and rationalisation, and instead contains Augusta’s transgression through the power of close friendships and affective familiar ties. The text thereby suggests that the social instability engendered by Japanese women’s consumption may be resolved not only by returning women to the role of “good wife, wise mother” (*ryōsai kenbo*), but also by creating

a community unified by strong emotional bonds that to some extent transcend the social boundaries that divide people. The text thus subverts the detective fiction genre to propose not rationality but a kind of irrationality as the antidote to the “diphtheria of modernity” (Kawana 2008, 2) In doing so, it reiterates the concerns of Japanese intellectual discourses on the organic community that were prominent in the 1930s and early 1940s.

*Count Cain* champions the affective community over Western rationality by drawing on the distinctive visual language of Japanese girls’ comics (*shōjo* manga) to produce intense affect that expresses the characters’ emotions and evokes a corresponding emotional response from the reader. The *shōjo* manga artist Takemiya Keiko claims that the irregular and open frames of the panels in *shōjo* manga enable the “lawless” movement of emotion across the page (as quoted in Shamoon 2012, 116). The *shōjo* culture critic Honda Masuko (2010) employs a similar motif to describe the aesthetics and ethics of *shōjo* manga. For Honda, *shōjo* manga are characterised by a *hirahira* (“fluttering”) movement in which meaning and selfhood are constantly floating around and crossing boundaries. Honda reads the ribbons and frills that abound in *shōjo* manga as visual signs of *hirahira*. Ribbons and frills are decorative and insubstantial, and thereby point to the nature of *shōjo* manga narratives as floating signifiers that “flutter” from meaning to meaning. Likewise, the lyrical rhetoric of *shōjo* manga, which is often presented on the printed page as free-floating text that is not framed by speech bubbles, is made up of floating verbal signifiers that have no fixed referent, and

whose function is affective rather than discursive. Honda's theorisation of *shōjo* manga's visual language has much in common with Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray's psychoanalytic theories of *écriture féminine* (1975). Like Cixous and Irigaray, Honda sees women's writing as inherently subversive. For Honda, the fluttering or flowing movement of *shōjo* manga collapses boundaries and enables both self and other to be mutually transformed and to take on an endless array of meanings.

My reading of *Count Cain*, however, proposes that *shōjo* manga's aesthetics of the "flow" is more concerned with generating and transmitting the flow of affect than with self-reflexively acting out the flow of meaning. The floating visual and verbal signifiers of *shōjo* manga carry affect rather than meaning across boundaries. Honda's claim that the lyrical rhetoric of *shōjo* manga plays a primarily affective rather than discursive role is instructive, and this is the starting point for my analysis.

*Count Cain* often depicts key scenes in a representational mode that I call *shōjo* manga's aesthetics of the "flow". Image 2 is drawn from Cain's point of view, and depicts Cain's half-brother Jizabel standing over the bloodied corpse of a young lady. The kneeling girl in the left-hand corner of the foreground is Cain's sister Merriweather.

Image 2: Cain comes face-to-face with his half-brother Jizabel. (*Count Cain Series: Godchild*,

Vol. 1, p. 163)

The composition of the panel is organised along the lines of a contrast between the straight vertical and horizontal lines of the window and the curved lines of Jizabel's trench coat, the window curtain, and the long hair of the three characters. The boxy lines of the window frame a dark night scene, and this pitch-black square in the centre-left of the background acts as a foil that emphasises the predominantly white and "flowing" figures in the foreground. The flowing lines create a sense of movement on a two-dimensional plane, but this movement is simultaneously arrested in space and time. The long, wavy strands of the three characters' hair seem to be floating suspended in mid-air. This freezing of action gives the panel a tableau-like quality, which is further enhanced by the positioning of this panel as the sole panel on the entire page. The text thus produces a moment of "melodramatic stasis" (Shamoon 2012, 116) that encourages the reader to pause in his/her pursuit of plot development, to dwell on this particular image, and to be "swept away" emotionally by the flowing dynamism of the image.

*Count Cain* associates the affect produced by this aesthetics of the "flow" with depictions of intimate human relationships. The scene in Image 2 represents the first time that Cain comes face-to-face with his half-brother Jizabel since the latter's disappearance at the end of the first instalment of *Count Cain*. Cain and Jizabel have a complicated relationship characterised by a contradictory mixture of sibling rivalry, jealousy, and love, which is eventually resolved at the end of the series when Jizabel sacrifices his life for Cain. By

attaching the flowing affect generated in Image 2 to the larger story of Cain and Jizabel's fraternal relationship, the text implicitly persuades the reader to identify with the value that it places on family.

"Family" in *Count Cain*, however, is not restricted to blood and kinship relations. Cain is supported in his struggle against Augusta by a motley crew of characters including his butler Riff, his adopted sister Merriweather, his friend and Merriweather's future husband Oscar, and his uncle Neil. These characters are united by strong ties of affection that transcend blood and kinship. In stimulating the reader's emotions through its aesthetics of the "flow," the text not only persuades the reader to identify with its valorising of the familial relations between the main characters, but also includes the reader in these relations. In this way, the text creates a community of characters and readers unified by strong emotional ties, and it presents this community as a countervailing opposition to the self-centredness of Augusta.

The text performs this inclusion of the reader in many of its key affective scenes. Image 3 is taken from an episode where Augusta sends an assassin, a girl called Mikayla, to harass Cain. Mikayla is a clone created out of the DNA of one of Cain's cousins. When Mikayla proves to be no longer useful, Augusta decides to kill her. She is rescued by Cain but her artificially created body has reached its maximum lifespan and begins to rapidly degenerate. As Mikayla lays on her deathbed, Cain's sister Merriweather tells her that Cain

would not have saved her if he had truly hated her, as she believes. Upon hearing this, Mikayla smiles with tears in her eyes and instantaneously disintegrates into a cloud of dust.

Image 3: Mikayla dies after hearing that Cain cares for her. (*Count Cain: Godchild*, Vol. 7, p. 183)

The curving arc of Mikayla's falling nightdress frames Merriweather in the centre-right of the lower panel, and this focuses the reader's gaze on Merriweather's stunned expression. This encourages the reader to share Merriweather's shock at Mikayla's untimely death at the very moment in which she is accepted as part of Cain's family in an emotional rather than purely biological sense. However, the "flowing" elements in the *mise en scène* simultaneously direct the reader's affective identification towards Mikayla, and evoke a sense of rapture as the material solidity of Mikayla's body vanishes into ephemeral dust. The folds and ruffles of Mikayla's empty nightdress curve gently upwards in the air, while the ribbons flutter and twirl in ornate patterns. The dust of Mikayla's body, which the text depicts as a soft mist, floats upwards into the air with the folds and ribbons of the nightdress. This upward flowing movement creates an uplifting affect that carries the reader's emotions, together with Mikayla's remains, into what feels like a transcendental realm of familial love.

The motif of flowing mist reappears in one of the final scenes of the manga series,



where Riff dies with his arms around Cain. Riff, like Mikayla, is a clone whose body has reached its limit, and the bones of his arms in Image 4 are covered with the same misty dust as that in Image 3.

Image 4: Riff dies protecting Cain. (*Count Cain Series: Godchild*, Vol. 8, pp. 202-203)

The grey mist floats from Riff's arms in the central panel into the background of the two flanking panels. A panel, according to McCloud in *Understanding Comics* (1993), acts as an indicator that time and/or space is being divided. In Image 4, the grey mist flows across the divisions of the panels, and fills the entire space of the two pages. The mist thereby evokes a sense of infinite time and space, suffused with the intense affect of Riff's love for Cain. This surfeit of affect seems to envelop the reader, encouraging him/her to immerse him/herself in this "ocean" of familial feeling.

In constructing this affective community or "family" of characters and readers, the *Count Cain Series* functions as a "happy object." Sara Ahmed argues in *The Promise of Happiness* (2010) that society defines certain things or forms of behaviour as "happy objects" that promise the individual happiness, and which should therefore be pursued as social goods. The "happy family," for Ahmed, is one such happy object. *Count Cain* constructs the happy

family as a happy object for both the characters within the narrative and the reader outside it. In *Count Cain*, the harmony of the happy family is a corrective to the social disorder that the text implies has been caused by women's consumption of commodities. Moreover, the manga itself functions as a happy object around which a happy family gathers. The text gives happiness by enabling the reader to imagine that he or she is part of an intimate community. Because it creates an immersive and emotional experience of reading that, to some extent, transcends the subject-positions of individual readers, *Count Cain* (and other similarly affective works of *shōjo* manga) is able to unite readers from different geographical and cultural contexts in a shared affective experience. Readers' imaginative participation in the happy family represented in the text thus becomes the basis for constructing a happy family of readers brought together by the collective consumption of the same text. Fan webpages and online forums are manifestations of such reader-families.

*Count Cain*'s interest in the idea of the happy family as a response to the social disorder engendered by industrial capitalism parallels that of Charles Dickens' industrial novel *Hard Times* (1854). On the one hand, *Count Cain* articulates anxieties about vampiric consumption and monstrous women consumers, which are also expressed in Victorian Gothic fiction (*Dracula*'s take on the New Woman comes to mind); Ranpo's detective fiction and public debates on the *moga* in Japan in the 1920s; and Japanese mass media reports on the Hanako syndrome in the 1980s and 1990s. The resonances between *Count Cain* and *Hard*

*Times* suggest that the responses to these anxieties too are similar in nineteenth-century Britain, and in Japan in the early twentieth century, and in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

*Hard Times* revolves around two vastly different families. Mr Gradgrind brings up his children on the principles of empirical science, logic, and rationalisation. These rational principles, the novel reveals, are the same principles that govern factory production in the fictional industrial city of Coketown in which the narrative is set. Mr Gradgrind eventually realises that these rational principles, which are the products of the industrial capitalist system and the means of that system's reproduction, have ruined his children's lives. The novel contrasts the unhappy Gradgrind family with Mr Sleary's circus troupe. The troupe, like Cain's motley crew of allies in *Count Cain*, is united primarily by emotional ties of affection, rather than by blood and kinship relations:

The basket packed in silence, they brought [Sissy's] bonnet to her, and smoothed her disordered hair, and put it on. Then they pressed about her, and bent over her in very natural attitudes, kissing and embracing her; and brought the children to take leave of her; and were a tender-hearted, simple, foolish set of women altogether. (52)

Like *Count Cain*, *Hard Times* rejects the idea that (Western) rationality is fully adequate to ensuring social stability, and presents the happy family as a happy object, which, when attained, would benefit society.

Japanese intellectuals in the 1930s and early 1940s similarly thought of the happy family as a social good, but they did so in the broader terms of the organic community. *Count Cain*'s evocation of an affective community of characters and readers much larger than that of the family in *Hard Times* echoes the themes and tropes of wartime Japanese communitarianism. Communitarian discourses, Harry Harootunian (2000) argues, emerged in Japan in reaction to anxieties about the *moga* and other social changes generated by industrialisation and the creation of a mass consumer culture in the 1920s. Both the manga and the communitarian discourses of the 1930s and early 1940s do not seek to achieve the "overcoming of modernity" (*kindai no chōkoku*) by turning to the rational restitution of social boundaries, as Conan Doyle's "The Man with the Twisted Lip" does.<sup>3</sup> Although they do not completely reject Western empirical science, logic, and the principle of rationalisation, they affirm the importance of building an organic community unified by intense emotional ties, which, to a partial extent, manage to "overcome" social boundaries. They challenge the idealisation of Western rationality that had begun with Westernisation in the nineteenth century, and imply that rationality is ultimately inadequate as a symbolic solution to the "mysteries" of capitalist modernity.

Japanese intellectuals in the 1930s and early 1940s thought that the commodification of everyday life in Japan was radically destabilising social roles and increasing social alienation, and they sought to restore order via a return to an original and authentic Japanese "communal

body” (*kyōdōtai*) (Harootunian 2000). Neo-nativist ethnologists such as Yanagita Kunio and Orikuchi Shinobu, and social theorists such as Takada Yasuma drew on Ferdinand Tönnies’ distinction between *gesellschaft* and *gemeinschaft* to propose a primordial Japanese racial community based on blood ties and ancient folk customs (Harootunian 2000). Like *Count Cain*, these discourses on the organic community championed the trope of the happy family to oppose the perceived menace of Western individualism. The *Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan (Kokutai no hongi)*, a government-backed treatise on the foundational tenets of the Japanese nation published in 1937, declares that “[o]ur country is a great family nation, and the Imperial Household is the head family of the subjects” ([1937] 1949, 89–90). The relationship between sovereign and subject, the text asserts, is “bound with sympathies similar to those between father and child” (90). As a result of this deep familial relationship, “differences of opinion or of interests that result from one’s position easily [merge] into one through our unique great harmony which springs from the same source” (98).

It is important to note here that this concept of a familial community, especially when applied to the creation of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, did not entirely reject Western science, logic, and the principle of rationalisation. The Co-Prosperity Sphere was premised on the idea that each East Asian nation should have its “proper place” and specific economic responsibilities in a regional economic system with Japan as the industrial centre

(Dower 1986). In other words, the familial community envisioned by Japanese intellectuals and the militarist state in the 1930s and early 1940s dissolved social divisions in a purely emotional rather than practical sense. The *Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan* captures this paradox succinctly when it proclaims that “[i]t is when this harmonious spirit [of familial bonding] of our nation is spread abroad throughout the world and every race and State, with due attention to its appointed duties, gives full play to its own characteristics, that true world peace and its progress and prosperity are realised” ([1937] 1949, 100). Nonetheless, there was no “proper place” for individualism in this simultaneously affective and rational system of socio-economic relations.

*Count Cain*, with its incorporation of the reader into an affective community of familial love, similarly rejects individualism and privileges the idea of the affective collective. However, the manga departs in significant ways from early twentieth-century Japanese discourses on the communal body. The happy family of readers created by *Count Cain* and other similarly affective *shōjo* manga texts is not based on race, folk traditions, or feelings of filial piety towards the Emperor as the patriarch of the Japanese nation. It is ironically based on the consumption of commodities, of which the Japanese militarist state in the 1930s and early 1940s disapproved.

In echoing the concerns of 1930s and 1940s Japanese communitarianism in the 1990s and 2000s, *Count Cain* participates in a longstanding dialectic in Japan between idealising

Western rationality and (partially) disavowing it in favour of the affective community. The text also updates this dialectic to square its championing of the affective community with the consumption of commodities, which has vastly increased since Ranpo's detective fiction and Japanese communitarian discourses began expressing anxieties about the rise of a mass consumer culture in the 1920s. The creation of an affective community based on the consumption of commodities such as *shōjo* manga certainly supports the Japanese state's current attempts to build Japanese economic power through the export of popular culture products to the United States, Europe, and especially to Japan's former colonies in Asia, under the banner of "Cool Japan."

The creation of a transnational readership of *shōjo* manga, however, also opens up the possibility of inspiring transnational political alliances built on the shared affective experience of familial belonging. The oceanic affective experience of consuming *shōjo* manga can be appropriated to encourage feelings of intimacy, which can in turn inspire collective political action in the service of chosen causes. *Shōjo* manga might even be part of what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) envision as "the multitude against Empire". The multitude, according to Hardt and Negri, is produced out of a "postmodern" form of global capitalism in which communicating knowledge, information, and *affect* plays a central role. Hardt and Negri argue that the multitude should appropriate these processes of communication to produce new social relations that will support a new mode of production,

which will be based on cooperation rather than on private property. Despite demonising the female consumer like its Victorian Gothic and 1920s Japanese precursors, *Count Cain* communicates affect and constructs affective communities through consumption, and it is ultimately through consumption that the manga can contribute to the multitude's subversion of global capitalism from within.



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<sup>1</sup> Some work has recently been done in re-conceptualising postcolonial studies from a global perspective. See Spivak 2003; the introduction in Thomsen 2008; Wilson, Sandru, and Welsh 2010; and Graham, Niblett, and Deckard 2012. For an earlier work that makes a similar claim that "postcolonialism" varies in different contexts, and cannot be limited to the former colonial possessions, see pp. 8 – 19 in Loomba 1998.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the Hanako phenomenon, see Muriel Jolivet's analysis of the "Hanako Syndrome" in *Japan: The Childless Society?* and Tokuhiro Yoko's discussion of women's magazines (pp. 44 –47) in *Marriage in Contemporary Japan*.

<sup>3</sup> "Overcoming Modernity" ("Kindai no chōkoku") was the title of a symposium convened in July 1942 to discuss the world-historical meaning of Japan's recent history of capitalist modernisation and its participation in the Second World War (Harootunian 2000).